

Can Fish Oil Help Dry Eye?

By: Dr. Shabir Ahmad “Muez”

While artificial tears or ointments are a common treatment for dry eye, studies suggest consuming omega-3 fatty acid supplements may also provide relief. Omega-3 oils appear to improve function in the eye’s meibomian glands, which produce the oily part of tears. Improved function of those glands can ease dry eye symptoms.



Dry eye becomes more common as a person ages. The problem develops when the eye cannot maintain a healthy coating of tears. Dry eye can be caused by hormonal changes brought on by menopause. There are a number of other causes. These include a dry environment or workplace (such as wind or air conditioning); sun exposure, smoking or secondhand smoke exposure; or cold or allergy medicines.

Some patients with dry eye, supplements or dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids (such as tuna fish) may decrease symptoms of irritation.

Stephanie Marioneaux, MD, a spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology, told The New York Times that the omega-3s in fish oil are believed to reduce inflammation. If inflammation of the eyelids or surfaces of the eye worsens dry eye, it makes sense that a supplement could help the problem. "Dry eye is pretty complex, and there is no cure," she said. "Treating the inflammation, however, can improve some of the symptoms."

A study of more than 32,000 women from the Women’s Health Study published in 2005 found those who consumed the most omega-3 fats from fish had a 17 percent lower risk of dry eye, compared with women who ate little or no seafood. More recently, a study in the International Journal of Ophthalmology concluded omega-3 fatty acids “have a definite role for dry eye syndrome.”

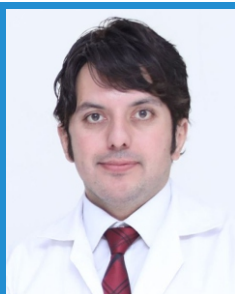
Omega-3 oils may also help in the treatment of other eye diseases. The oils may reduce growth of abnormal blood vessels that occur in age-related macular degeneration and other retinal vascularization diseases.

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Reference:

- <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/does-fish-oil-help-dry-eye>
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